Depot Town Rag

Volume 13, Number 4 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

100% FREE Rag content

APRIL 1990

Steam Excursion

Frog theme ideas

Pots & Pool opportunities

Memories from 1900

Cloggers' welcome

. . . and other strictly local stuff

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

The Thompson Block today: Careful observation and propitious lighting reveal Joe Thompson's original sign painted on the diagonal across the south wall of the building.

Memories of the "Early Depot Town"

by Joseph H. Thompson

Several years ago, Mr. Thompson recorded his recollections of Depot Town at the turn of the Century. They have been printed out of context several times in the last decade but, beginning with this issue, the entire monologue is printed in three installments. Beginning on the next page, the italicized parentheses are the editor's observations of current uses of the buildings mentioned by Mr. Thompson, and some are questionable.

Beginning this month: **North River Street and the north side of Cross Street.** In the May issue: South side of Cross Street and south on River Street. In the June issue: Four closing anecdotes: scams, smokes, stamps & streetcars and the Follett House scam.

DEPOT TOWN BLUES FEST

Benefit for August's Heritage Jazz

Doors open 6:30 pm, show starts at 7 pm

Saturday, April 21, 1990

At the Depot Town Freighthouse

"Detroit is well on its way to becoming a contender for Chicago's blues crown," says Bill French, of the local committe, "and we've dug deep to bring the finest of both towns together for a Blues Fest you'll never forget."

FEATURING:

- **OTIS CLAY** - "The Soul Man" and his 6-piece hot-blooded soul-stirring band. A legend from Chicago via Memphis.
- **Little Sonny** - Detroit's most famous international performer and his blues review lays down a groove so tight you might not get out.
- **Robert Penn** - "88's best blues vocalist," says *Metro Times;* Detroit's next blues king?
- **Juanita McCray** - Our favorite blues lady; she's to Detroit what Koko Taylor is to Chicago -- The Queen of the Blues.

$10 advance tickets available at all Ticketmasters (645-6666,) Sidetrack (483-1035), Aubree's (483-1873). Call WEMU for information (487-2229). Tickets $12 at the door.

Produced by the Blues Factory.

DATELINE: DEPOT TOWN

- **10,000 square-foot addition** takes shape behind City Body's garage..
- **Fourth of July** Committee ponders parade route through Depot Town.
- **Michigan Consolidated Gas Co.** continues to find leaks from old pipes leading into buildings in the block, digging up street and side walks to replace them.
- **Volunteers** for set-up, gate, security, clean-up for the 21 April Blues Fest: call Tom Dodd(482-6371)
- **NO PARKING** signs were erected around the Plaza next to the Freighthouse.

DDA petitions City Council to unify District

The Depot Town Downtown Development Authority has petitioned City Council to add five properties to the district that was created six years ago. An official hearing will beheld by the City at 7:30 pm, Monday, April 16, in City Council chambers for all who are interested in commenting on the possibility of unifying the DDA district.

The affected properties include 18-20 East Cross Street (City Body), 24 East Cross Street (Olde Towne Coin & Gold), 100 East Cross Street (Miller Motors), 400-412 North River Street (Thompson Block), and 315 Ninde Street (Garage)

All six properties were omitted from the original plan when it was drawn up in 1984.

In January of of this year, City Council made the 2 mil Ad Valorem tax levy possible on the currently included properties which could capture up to $3000 per year for the administration of the Development Authority.

With the unification of the District, DDA appointees hope to create a master plan for the district and persue Tax Increment Financing, which will capture increased valuation and keep it within the District for public improvments.

A 1990 Jazz calendar for Depot Town

April 21
Blues Fest Benefit

•

June 22, 23, 24
Frog Island Festival

•

August 17, 18, 19
Heritage Jazz Competition

Toward the June *frog theme* for window displays, special sales, menu items, etc:

Here's an idea list to initiate your plan:

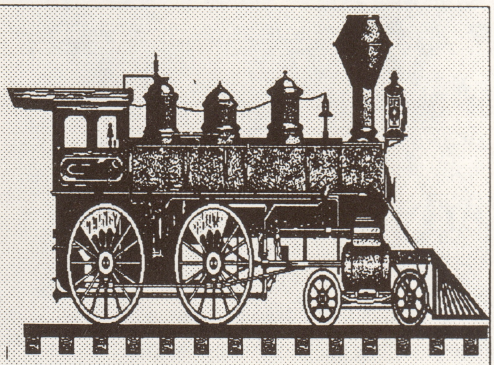
Calaveras jumping frogs, frog costumes, green drinks, green lighting effects at night, froggies would a-wooing-go, musical frogs, jazz themes, frog families of dolls, bean bag frogs, ceramic frogs, green floral designs, salad specials, frogs' legs, green waitpersons, and Kermit, of course!

DEPOT PEOPLE:

Trains, Jazz, and Antiques broadcast from district on WEMU

Above: Sunday, 11 March 1990, saw WEMU's *Railroadin' Jazz Edition* broadcast from the show window of Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing / James MacDonald's Antiques. From left to right are Dr. Arwulf, WEMU's resident jazz/musicologist; Rick Talbot, Apple Annie's principal; and Christopher Truzzi, WEMU engineer. The program aired from 10 am to 1 pm.

All aboard for the SOUTHWIND LIMITED IV



May 19-20, 1990

Steamtrain/Riverboat weekend excursion
- Norfolk Southern J 611 Steam Locomotive
- West Virginia Belle Riverboat

9:00 am Saturday morning: Board the steamtrain in Bellevue, Ohio, behind the largest operating passenger steam locomotive in the world today. Meet the newly constructed riverboat, West Virginia Belle, at Ironton, Ohio, and be treated to a leisurely (approx. 3 hrs) prime-rib dinner/dance/cruise to Huntington, West Virginia for an overnight hotel stay.

9:30 am Sunday morning: Transfer by bus to Kenova, WV. for a 10:30 am train departure returning to Bellevue approx. 7:30 pm. *Photo run-by weather permitting.*

Coach fare: $199 includes train fare, 2 box lunches on train, riverboat dinner/dance/cruise, bus transfers and overnight lodging in Huntington.

First class fare: $289 includes train fare, contintental breakfast served on the train Saturday, lunches and light refreshments both days, riverboat dinner/dance/cruise, bus transfers, overnight lodging in Huntington, Lounge car seating, Sunday Morning Breakfast buffet before leaving Huntington. *(Business Car for small group $350 per person. Call for availability).*

Group rates are available - contact Mad River NKPRR Society for information.

This trip sold out early in 1989, so make your reservations soon. No refunds after May 6. Possession/consumption of intoxicating beverages/illicit drugs is prohibited on the train. For the comfort of all our passengers, smoking is permitted only in restroom lounges or vestibule area between cars.

Mad River & NKP Railroad Society, Inc.
233 York Street
Bellevue, Ohio 44811-1377

1990 marks the tenth year of cooperation between the Depot Town Association and the Mad River NKP RR Society

Ypsilanti:
more culture than yogurt!
June 22, 23, 24, 1990
Frog Island
Zydeco, Gospel
Blues & Jazz
A huge district promotion will accompany this gala three-day event

Esquire
Custom Drapery & Blinds

Custom Draperies
Vertical Blinds • 1" Blinds
Shutters • Shades
Wallpaper
Installation • Repairs
Ann Arbor 663-7011
Ypsilanti 482-6338
IN HISTORIC DEPOT TOWN
10 E. Cross St. Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Depot Town pottery at Ice Cream Parlor

Westerwald Potter, a product of western Pennsylvania, is now available at Depot Town's **Occasion Station** with the "Depot Town" name and logo prominently incised in its cobalt blue-glazed clay base.

Blue and grey stoneware was made in Germany's Westerwald region as early as the 16th century. These vessels were sold throughout the contintent and were prized for their strength and beauty. Later cobalt-decorated stoneware was produced by 19th century American potters.

Westerwald Pottery was established in Pennsylvania in 1975 to satisfy the growing demand for hand-made decorated pottery. While production has increased dramatically at Westerwald, the same high standards which characterized pottery making hundreds of years ago continue here today.

The Depot Town series of blue and grey stoneware was designed by Phil Schaltenbrand, owner and founder of Westerwald Pottery. Twelve separate hands-on process are necessary for completion. Each product is wheel-thrown, brush decorated, and kiln fired at 2300 degrees Fahrenheit. The glazes are lead-free, microwave, and dishwasher safe. All pieces are stamped with a potter's mark, signed, and date.

The work is on display in the recently expanded gift line at the **Occasion Station** and complements the usual good taste of Miller's Ice Cream at 42 East Cross Street.

YPSI DIXIT

A response to the January proposal for district-wide promotions included the following observation on such group planning:

"When all is said and done, a lot more's said than done."

The Cozy Corner comes to the Follett House

George Stopolous, restaraunt at Michigan Avenue and US 23, brings billiards back to Depot Town with a 10-item kitchen and unique presentation of food and entertainment. Watch for the grand opening this month is the historic Follett House - on the corner of East Cross and Rice Streets. It's the district's premier location for sidewalk dining.

June *Rag* specials

Sponsors are reminded to create special copy for the June issue of *The Depot Town Rag* which will run 6500 copies (5000 more than ususal) in a special eight-page format for the Frog Island Jazz Fest program. It's a unique opportunity to bring hundreds of jazz fans into the block.

Welcome to the district. Can you clog?

Donyale Maynard, manager of the Occasion Station (Miller's Ice Cream), followed the old commercial district tradition and moved into an apartment over the shop last month.

As if the first night with freight and passenger trains rolling by wasn't enough, she was awakened by a 'loud party' on the floor below at around midnight. Around 2 a.m. Donyale decided to go down and meet her new neighbors -- and what a wise decision that was! All the rest of the building's tenants were there -- clogging on the wooden floors!

Rather than risk being perceived as a dud, Donyale quickly joined the district's most recent tradition -- early morning clogging on antique wooden floors.

Welcome to the block!

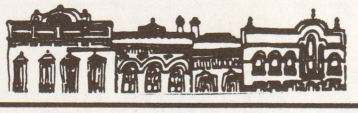
SIDETRACK
Good Food, Good Drinks, Good Times
56 East Cross Street
483-1053

Red Rooster Pizza
. . . and Dairy Bar
37 East Cross • 483-4555

Aubree's Saloon & Second Floor
39 East Cross Street

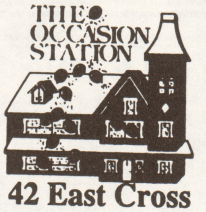
Ike's Depot Barbershop
40 East Cross

MESSINA'S CHEESE
At the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market
Wed or Sat 483-1480 or 459-1995 any time
April Cheese Sale:
Cojack - $3.95 lb.
Ex Ex Ex Sharp Cheddar
Wow! $4.29 lb.
Try our BACON!!!



KATRINA'S HA[illegible]DIO

Featuring KATRINA'S COSMETICS
483-3644
Matrix-Paul Mitchell



42 East Cross

42 East Cross
485-7546

Teachers Shop & LEARNING CENTER, LTD.
313·482-6373
15 E. CROSS STREET • YPSILANTI, MI. 48198

YOUR K12 CONNECTION
all materials for CLASSROOMS & CURRICULA

Local ads only $10 a month!

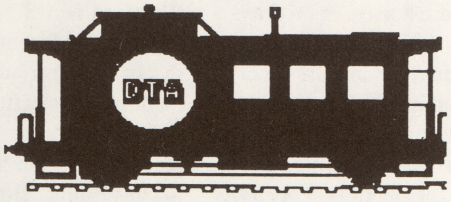
The Depot Town Association, Inc. March 15

Guests: Tony Caprarese, president, Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce.

Minutes of 15 February 1990 accepted as read.

Treasury: DTA General Fund = ›2420.25.

• Detroit Edison has requested a $250.00 commercial service deposit on the DTA's Caboose account.



Budget/Events:

• Ypsilanti Visitor and Convention Bureau director, Mary Kerr, has received numerous requests from tourist buses wishing to stop and see Depot Town. She is looking for three liaison people who live and/or work in Depot Town to discuss the logistics of hosting tourists and serve as a reception committee. A new Depot Town Flyer targeting the bus tour market is being developed.

• The April 21 benefit for Heritage Jazz is in the final planning stages. Miscommunication resulted in our flyer missing WEMU's March flyer. The flyer will be available in the neighborhood and through a limited mailing. Public radio stations WEMU and WDET will be carrying advertising also. Due to questions from Ypsilanti City Attorney, John Barr, insurance agreements are not yet agreed upon.

• A Heritage Benefit Raffle is well underway thanks to some enterprising merchants. The grand prize features four tickets to an Aretha Franklin concert.

• Frog Island neighborhood promotions are well on their way with plans for green balloons and an overall "Green Theme" to inundate the streets of Depot Town in conjunction with the festivities in the park.

• Sunday, March 18, the DTA executive committee will meet to outline agreement requirements for Frog Island's 2nd year of co-sponsorship with The Ark.

• Thursday, March 22, a petition regarding Depot Town's streets during Heritage Festival will be presented to the Heritage Festival committee. A proposal featuring music and antique fire engines in Cross Street could be a welcome addition to the Heritage Festival.

• Depot Town should mark May 19 on its collective calendar. A two-day, three-on-three basketball tournament will be filling Huron Street with both players and spectators (what a spectacle!). This will provide a great opportunity for Depot Town to show itself off. An organizational meeting with the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce is being planned.

• DTA will once again sponsor The Great Train Race at Heritage Festival.

Membership/Volunteers:

• The Heritage Benefit is looking for a few good folk to count, control, set-up, and ceanup in support of jazz in Depot Town on April 21. Contact Tom Dodd to set up your shift.

Rag Report: The flow of propaganda will slow as Rag editor, Tom Dodd, travels to the USSR. Judy Monaghan will take over the paper route.

• Plans are for eight pages of Rag to feature and celebrate Depot Town and the Frog Island Festival in June. Sponsor specials will be featured.

Caboose: To old your next meeting the Caboose you'll need $25 and a $10 key deposit. Contact Gary McKeever at 483-4256.

NIFTY (New Initiative For Tourism in Ypsilanti):

• Jerrry Meadows suggests a long term promotional plan be developed in conjunction with The Ark, featuring both the Frog Island Festival as a premier national music event and premier musical events at large.

Other business:

• Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce president, Tony Caprarese, introduced himself and his hope for a community cohesiveness to be developed and fostered among Ypsilanti's businesses. DTA was impressed as he stayed even after discovering that the Association is not made up of our neighborhood's merchants. Tony's first project will be making the upcoming Gus Macher tournaments a city-wide event. He is planning an open meeting in Depot Town to address merchant marketing in conjunction with the street games.

– Dues to the Washtenaw Council of the Arts and the Central Business Community have been paid.

• City Body's Scott Sobbry is running for reelection to the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

• Someone has noticed Depot Town's "Diamond in the Rough" as a new and long overdue interest in being shown in the redevelopment of the MCRR train depot at Ypsilanti.

• Frog Island name coregistration papers are on their way to WEMU.

• The Depot Town DDA will once again address the addition fo properties to the district at City Council on April 16.

Golden Goose Award: to Detroit Edison's tree trimmer training which decimated both trees and lights in Ypsilanti's Riverside Park.

The Best Yet Award: to the DPW for obscuring the graffiti on Frog Island's block house.

April 1990

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Development Authority (DDA)
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 4/12
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 4/19
The Old Caboose

Antique Engine Club
7:00 p.m. Thursday, 4/26
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

You can R E N T
The Old Caboose
for your
• Birthday Party • Anniversary
• Catered Dinner • Board Meeting
Electric baseboard heating, tables and chairs.
Who could ask for anything more?
($25 + $10 refundable deposit)
Call 483-4256.

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

·Tom Dodd, editor

Depot Town Association, Inc.
Paul Fetters, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Active Memberships :
• Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce
• Washtenaw Council for the Arts
• Neighborhood Associations of Michigan
• Central Business Community

HANSEN'S
Standard Printing
35 E. Cross St. • Ypsilanti
In Historic Depot Town

Business Cards • Brochures • Copies
Weddings • Posters
FAX Service
(313) 483-0339

Joe Thompson remembers:
North River Street and the north side of Cross Street

I hope that you will pardon me if I begin with the business my parents operated on the corner of River and Cross Streets. It was known as the Thompson Building *(Fantasee Lighting)*. My grandfather, O.E. Thompson, my father, Benjamin Thompson, my uncle, Edward Thompson, and my uncles, John Thompson were very busy in the manufacturing of agricultural implements; root cutters, grass seeders, kraut and slaw cutters, and later, porch swings. They employed about 40 men. They also ran a retail business selling coal, building supplies, carriages and wagons, paint and wallpaper and, at one time, sold over 200 bicycles in one year. They had the agency for the Nichols and Shepherd threshing engines that were made in Battle Creek. I recall that they had a crew of paper hangers and painters that were busy in the city in that line or work.

In the Thompson Building there was also a tailor by the name of Otto Biske that made hand-made clothes for many of the people who could afford it. *[Picture Perfect Tatoos]*. Right next to Mr. Biske's tailor shop was the city fire department where they operated one horse, and a couple of firemen who slept upstairs over the fire equipment *[Thompson Building Antiques Mall]*. During the off hours, Tommy Wilkinson operated this horse in picking up the refuse on the Depot streets. (You know they had horses in those days.) And up on the top of the building was a large bell that would ring and the number of strokes would tell you what location in town the fire was burning or being extinguished.

Across the street was the Michigan Central Depot with all its busy trains coming and going and baggage wagons and hacks calling out for the Hawkins House *[on Michgan Avenue]* and Occidental Hotel *[on North Huron Street]*, a couple of baggage wagons that were handling the baggage and sample trunks that the salesmen used in selling their wares. The Depot at that time was a two-story building and a fire burned off the top of it and they reduced it to one floor. On that Michigan Central *(line)* they had one train they called the "paper train" that left Detroit at 2 o'clock at night and took the newspapers all the way up the line from the Detroit publishers. Then they had a train they called "the blind baggage" which had one coach on the rear with holes where the guardians could poke their guns out if it was held up. It carried the money from Detroit to Chicago. Then there was a car on that train they called the "silk car' that carried silk in bales that was all made up in fabric. The Depot was so busy that it was really a nice exciting place to go as kids. Madison Parsons called out the trains, "Train going west, Ann Arbor, Jackson, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo" etc. Tommy Thompson, in a uniform, sold tickets and George Oberst was a baggageman. That was a very big part of the traveling in those days.

Across the tracks was the freight depot *[Farmers' Market]* where horse-drawn drays hauled all the freight that came in box cars and shipped out all of the manufactured products for Ypsilanti including the Penninsula Paper Company and other factories that were doing pretty well. The train stopped for water there and the gardens next to the depot *[north end]* were something to behold. Mr. John Laidlaw, a Scotch gardener, was known all up and down the line for his display of flowers and he would build huge arrangements out of flowers and plants like the Niagara Falls and the battleship Maine and the head boys got on the trains and gave the ladies little bouquets when they stopped in Ypsilanti.

Up the tracks a little farther from the greenhouse were the stock-yards *[near Michigan Ladder Company]* where once a week they shipped livestock in cattle cars. The drovers, well, I remember Mr. Farnsby Horner and Dick Spencer would buy this livestock and then have it brought to the stock yards once a week where they shipped it out.

To come back to East Cross Street - on the corner across the tracks was a hotel called the Neat House, as I remember the first name on it *[Aubree's Saloon]*. Then it was changed to the Lewis House. Then a fellow came down from Michigan Center named Dad Yates who opened a tavern and did a thriving business. Oliver Westfall afterwards had the hotel and it had a bar downstairs and sleeping rooms upstairs for maybe 15 or 20 people. Next to this hotel was a drug store *[Red Rooster Pizza & Dairy Bar]* that was operated by Robert Kilian and in the drug store was a jewelry repair outfit run by Mr. E.N. Colby, where they cleaned watches and sold small articles of jewelry. Killian had a wonderful soda fountain and the kids all went in there when they had the money to buy one. Next door was Clark and House's grocery and later the store was operated by Mr. H.A. Palmer as a hardward store *[Hansen's Standard Printing Company]*. The next store, going west, was a meat market *[Cross Street Antiques]* run by Mr. Charlie Fairschild and his wife, Lilly, and next to that was the Robert's House, another bar with rooms upstairs *[pedestrian walkway]*. Just beyond that was the Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Company *[Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing & James MacDonald's Antiques]* that moved out from Detroit where it was known as the Phoenix Reed Furniture Company. They employed probably 35 to 40 men making reed furniture which was very popular in those days and they stayed for a number of years and finally moved to Jackson, Michigan where they got prison labor for 50 cents a day. That was the end of the Ypsilanti Reed Furniture. On the corner west of there *[new deli/was the Mean Bean)* was a hardware store operated by Whitford and Simmons, Theodore Whitford and Mr. Cal Simmons. They had a tin shop in the back room and in their spare time they made all sorts of tin utensils and eaves-troughs and down-spouts and all that stuff that was made by hand in those days.

That Follett House had quite a history, but I never recall when it was a hotel. It was a factory from the time that I remember.

Across the street west of the hardware was the Deubel Mill where they ground up wheat and made flour *[Teachers Shop, Kelly Services, Image, etc.]* . It was run by water power from the Huron River with a race that ran north to the dam near Forest Avenue. Up the race a little ways was a saw mill that Mr. H.R. Scovill operated with his partner, George Follmor *[Frog Island playing field]*. The farmers brought in their logs and they were dumped into the race and floated down until the mill was ready to saw them up into lumber. Frog Island across from the race was just full of lumber piles of all different kinds and descriptions. Of course, it was all delivered by horses with immense drays. Up the race a little farther was a sash and door mill *[north of the Recycling Center]* that was operated by Scovill and across the river was the Hay and Todd Manufacturing Company or the Ypsilanti Underwear Company that was also run by water power *[Riverside Supply]*. Just think - that dam operated water power for the woolen mill, for the sash and door, for the Scovill log mill, and for the Deubel Flour Mill. Quite a lot of power came from the Huron River.

On Forest Avenue, across from the woolen mill *[Farm Bureau]* , was a tannery that Mr. Holland ran. He would buy hides from the farmers and tan them into leather. This was quite an operation. He also bought junk. Us kids used to sell him all the metal we could find around and he was a very nice old man as I can remember.

On Forest Avenue, up a little farther on River Street, was a malt house run by Mr. Fred Swain *[northeast corner, behind Ancheutz' home]*. They converted barley into malt that was sold to extensive brewery operations around like Forrester's *[Ypsilanti Ford plant at 1-94]* and like the ones in Ann Arbor and Manchester. That seemed to be a part of the brewing that was very essential in making beer.

RAGTIME

YPSI FOOD COOP

Fresh produce every day!
Organic chicken, eggs and beef
Open to the public
7 days a week
312 North River Street
483-1520

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
in historic Depot Town
Every Wednesday and Saturday
all year 'round

Open 7 days
M-F 10-7
Sat 10-5
Sun 12-5
IMAGE PHOTO LAB
Michael Leach — **11 East Cross**
Toni McCarthy — **482-3370**

Olde Towne Coin & Gold
24 East Cross
483-6155

Our Little Secret
Resale Clothing & Other Niceties
23 E. Cross Street
483-3637

THOMPSON BUILDING MALL
Antiques and Stained Glass
412 North River • 483-3472
Buying & Selling of Estates
and/or Single Items

BELL, BOOK & CANDLE
44 E. Cross St. • 487-1970

JAMES MacDONALD'S
ANTIQUES
&
APPLE ANNIE'S
VINTAGE CLOTHING
29 East Cross • 481-0555

Hon's Flowers & Fancies
46 East Cross
482-2124

J & R TRADING POST
GENERAL STORE
Old, New and In-Between Things
MANY GIFT ITEMS - Old Records
The latest fashion in
HATS for Men and Women
21 East Cross • 483-5870

We love to buy Antiques
DEPOT EXCHANGE ANTIQUES
54 E. Cross • 482-1780
Next to Sidetrack
Professional Stripping & Refinishing

TED'S Auto Electric
307 North River • 483-1238

Designs On You Stitchin' Shop
- Gowns for all occasions
- Custom Apparel
- Evening & Career Wear
- Alterations
- Patterns created

482-2010
27 E. Cross
Tues-Fri 10 am -6 pm
Sat 10 am - 5 pm
Evenings by appt.
EUROPEAN DRESSMAKERS

COUNT ON KELLY FOR QUALIFIED TEMPORARY HELP.
√Office Clerical
√Personal Computer
√Word Processing
√Data Entry
√Accounting
√Light Industrial
√Marketing
√Technical Support
Ann Arbor - 761-5700
Ypsilanti - 482-7749
KELLY Temporary Services
The Kelly Girl® People - The First And The Best.™

City Radiator
100 North River 483-2248

CITY BODY
20 East Cross Street
Front end alignment
& Collision repair